

Spectrum

Signal Soldiers connect remote posts

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MOSUL, Iraq – In today’s high-tech world, it is hard to imagine life without a phone line or internet access. In Iraq, not having internet connectivity and phone lines can sometimes be the difference between life and death.

For the Soldiers and commanders of 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, that difference is made by Bravo Company, 63rd Expeditionary Signal Battalion from Fort Gordon, Ga.

“We are here to provide communications support to 3d ACR with data and digital connectivity,” said Capt. Michael Burns, of Pittsburgh, Kan. “We give them the pipes to talk to the outside world and to talk internally.”

This mission allows the commander to have situational awareness and command his troops, said Burns, commander of Bravo Company.

The 63rd ESB attached to 3d ACR in June to deploy to the National Training Center for training, then deployed to Iraq with them in November.

“This is the first time for the Signal Corps to deploy under the new signal architecture as an expeditionary signal battalion to attach to and provide communications to a combat arms unit,” said Burns.

Signal troops work in a variety of positions to assist 3d ACR with communications, from handling network operations, setting up line of sight signal systems and setting up and managing secure and non-secure communication lines. The 63rd does this by embedding multi-channel transmission system operators and maintainers with units on small combat outposts throughout Mosul and the Ninewah Province, said Burns.

“We have five locations of COPs that we provide support to,” said Burns. “Of course

Virginia Beach, Va. native, Spc. Ray Miller and Sgt. Charlie Tenio, of Moncks Corner, S.C., insert a section of a signal tower in Mosul, Iraq, April 3. Tenio and Miller are multi-channel transmission system operator and maintainers with Bravo Company, 63rd Expeditionary Signal Battalion.

the everyday Soldier just wants to be able to call home, so we make sure we get out there and help them with that. We also take care of the secret communications side of the house.”

An important piece of the communications role is the network operations.

“Our mission is important because without communications, you really don’t know what must be done when it has to be done,” said Sgt. Gregg Cross, of Newark, N.J. “My job is to make sure people can talk. Once they can talk, they can get done what they have to get done.”

The network operations of 63rd ESB provides signal communications, voice and data so the war fighter can do their job, said Cross, a multi-channel transmission system operator who works network operations. Network operations also provides the means for Soldiers to communicate from the commander to the Soldier in the field.

In the past, Soldiers have had to rely on lower-tech communications equipment. This

meant delays in communications, and less information being passed from troops in the field to commanders.

“If you just rely on FM radios, you have to wait in between transmissions,” said Cross. “It is a longer and slower process. In this day and age of information technology where they (commanders) like to see pictures and streaming video, that is what we provide. That is why what we do is important.”

It may be a new way of working for Soldiers of the 63rd, but the relationship between the 63rd and 3d ACR has been beneficial to both units involved, said Burns, who has no doubts about his Soldiers’ ability to perform a difficult mission in a hostile environment.

“If you spin the globe and put your finger on it, anywhere, we can deploy the company there and set up communications,” said Burns.

“That is the amount of faith I have. I know the Soldiers will accomplish the mission. They are an amazing bunch of Soldiers.”

ACCOUNTS FROM THE FIELD



U.S. Army photos by Spc. Eric Rutherford



The 60-foot tower set up by Soldiers from Bravo Company, 63rd Expeditionary Signal Battalion is dwarfed by an Iraqi public communication tower in the distance in Mosul, Iraq, April 3.



(Above and right) Newark, N.J. native, Sgt. Gregg Cross explains how to properly set support wires while setting up a signal tower in Mosul, Iraq, April 3. Cross is a multi-channel transmission system operator and maintainer with Bravo Company, 63rd Expeditionary Signal Battalion. Signal Soldiers set up the tower at a Combat Outpost to help keep the remote outpost in touch.

